



Jaime de Pablos, Mª Elena (ed.). *Análisis de género en los estudios irlandeses*. Almería: Editorial Universidad de Almería, 2007. ISBN: 978-84-8240-705-0. 130 pp.

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The publication in October 2002 of the eagerly awaited volumes IV and V of *The Field Day Anthology*, devoted to women's writing and traditions in Ireland, gave a new impulse to the process, which began more than a decade ago, of uncovering Irish female voices from ancient times to the present. As the general editors claim, "The initial proposal for the present work emerged after the publication of that three-volume anthology, which coincided with a perceived flowering of women's writing, political activism and feminist scholarship in Ireland, and led to an intense debate about the position accorded to women in the formation of literary canons" (Bourke et al. 2002: xxxii). *Pillars of the House: An Anthology of Verse by Irish Women from 1690 to the Present* (1987) pioneered this movement of accepting and celebrating the presence of female voices in 'mainstream' history and literature. Since then, many studies have clearly established firm grounds on this subject, thus reshaping the boundaries of Irish Studies by integrating women's writing into Ireland's literary canon. One such book is *Women Creating Women: Contemporary Irish Women Poets* (1996) by Patricia Haberstroh, which focused on what Allen-Randolph (1999: 205) calls the "unprecedented arrival" of Irish women writers in the eighties and nineties. More recently, studies such as *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Ireland* (Bradley & Gialanella Valiulis 1997) and *Border Crossings: Irish Women Writers and National Identities* (Kirkpatrick 2000) have provided the necessary theoretical tools for readdressing women's position within Irish nationalism, identity and culture.

The recently published collection of essays *Análisis de género en los estudios irlandeses* (*Gender Analysis in Irish Studies*), edited by Mª Elena Jaime de Pablos, participates in this ongoing cultural movement of rereading and reassessing Irish history and literature from a gender perspective. This collection brings together the recent research of leading scholars of Irish studies in Spain. Drawing on a wide range of critical approaches (literary criticism, feminism, ecocriticism, historicism, etc.), the essays comprehensively explore the different and contesting representations of femininity and masculinity in a large corpus of Irish literary texts written both by men and women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Their scope is ambitious, in their analysis of conventional and innovative representations of Irish men and women, their contrastive analysis of male and female authors in Ireland, and their comparative reading of how women have been represented in Ireland and in Spain.

Four essays in the collection explore representations of women in Irish male writing. In “Women and Nature in *The Lake* by George Moore”, Jaime de Pablos examines, from the perspective of ecofeminism, the role of Nora Glynn, the female protagonist of this novel published in 1921. Like many other male writers at the time, George Moore establishes in *The Lake* an association between women and nature. Whereas in patriarchal standards this mystical connection is used in order to strengthen male hegemony (by deeming women/ nature as passive, irrational and inferior to men/ culture), ecofeminists such as Mary Daly and Susan Griffin believe that if women align themselves with nature, they will be able to create spaces that are free of patriarchal influence. Jaime de Pablos draws on these critics in order to defend the positive identification between Norah Glynn with nature. As the author explains, her profound connections with the environment are a reflection of her vitality, strength, dynamism and independence. Nora also stands as an allegory of the “new woman”, the feminist ideal that emerged in the last decades of the nineteenth century, as she does not comply with feminine conventions and she has the courage to pursue her life according to her own ideals and standards.

Morales Ladrón’s essay similarly analyses subversive representations of women in masculine narratives. Focusing on Roddy Doyle’s 1996 novel *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, Morales Ladrón explores the physical and psychological degradation of Paula, a mother of four children who has suffered domestic violence for eighteen years. Doyle offers a scathing critique of Ireland’s contemporary society, revealing the hypocrisy of ‘patriarchal’ institutions such as the family, public health, religion and education, which sanction masculine hegemony by ignoring Paula’s dreadful situation. As Morales Ladrón claims, this novel brings into focus the pervasive influence of the precepts of the 1937 Constitution, which relegated women to the roles of mothers and housewives. In her exclusion from the public – and particularly labour – terrain, Paula economically depends on her husband, becoming a mere ‘object’ in the hands of masculine power.

Irish women have not only been silenced and marginalized by patriarchal power; they have also become ideological tools for expressing nationalist aspirations. García de Salazar’s study focuses precisely on this aspect, by examining how many Irish male writers found necessary to claim independence and sovereignty by declaring their ‘masculine’ power and reinforcing gender divisions. In particular, he examines the role of women in two nineteenth-century plays: *Spanish Patriots a Thousand Years Ago*, by Henry Brereton Code and *The Rose of Arragon* by James Sheridan Knowles. These plays reflect the social, political and religious divisions between Ireland and England by making use of gender stereotypes, such as the symbolic identification between Ireland and the Mother.

In her comparative reading of *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* by Federico García Lorca and *Dancing at Lughnasa* by Brian Friel, Inés Praga Terente also shows how Irish women have been doubly colonized by a restrictive nationalism which has been fused to Catholicism. Praga Terente skilfully reveals the similarities between these two

plays, which, in spite of being temporally and culturally separated, equally reflect female characters who are trapped in a claustrophobic and patriarchal rural community highly determined by restrictive social, cultural and religious pressures. In particular, the essay deals with the sexual repression of the protagonists and their tragic fate when they transgress the borders of the domestic sphere. The author shows how both plays are, in many ways, emblematic for the stifling social and cultural circumstances of Ireland and Spain in the 1930s.

Another important section in this collection of essays offers illuminating and innovative critical readings of literary texts written by Irish women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In “New Tendencies in the Irish female *Bildungsroman*”, María Amor Barros del Río examines the many differences and similarities between traditional male *Bildungsroman* and nineteenth- and twentieth-century Irish novels of female development. Barros del Río particularly focuses on some of the most remarkable and representative Irish women writers within this narrative form, such as Kate O’Brien, Edna O’Brien, Eilís Ní Dhuibhne, Kate Cruise O’Brien or Moya Roddy, among others. All these writers position themselves outside traditional *Bildungsroman* parameters, in order to articulate alternative outcomes of female development. They firmly oppose feminine roles of subordination, by describing “the protagonist’s journey from the enclosed realm of the familial home into the social world” (Felski 134). Furthermore, marriage and motherhood are eventually perceived in their work as insufficient means of achieving personal fulfilment and female self-discovery. The question of how this narrative form is related to historical forces is particularly important to the study of the Irish female *Bildungsroman*, because, as the author explains, women in Ireland represent a special complexity: whichever the medium of expression, they have been doubly silenced, both as national(ist) icons and idealized custodians of tradition, and also as beloved muses of the male artist. The corpus of texts analysed by Barros del Río shows the pressing need that many Irish women experience even nowadays to escape the burden of the colonial past, and to find their own space in private and public terrains.

In her analysis of Somerville and Ross’s nineteenth-century novel *The Real Charlotte*, Díez Fabre also examines, in a historical light, the rebellious attitude of the female protagonist, a ruthless and manipulative middle-aged woman who, in spite of the decline of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, is fiercely determined to improve her own status in life by finding a good husband with wealth and land. Challenging current readings of the protagonist as a mere diabolic, Faustian figure, “a classic study of ‘the banality of evil’” (Kiberd 78), Díez Fabre interprets the ambitious and malevolent attitude of this character from a feminist perspective. She draws on Gilbert and Gubar’s (2000: 28) theoretical claims in order to characterize Charlotte as “the monster-woman”, an embodiment of “intransigent female autonomy” who refuses to stay in her ordained life of feminine submission. This innovative reading offers new insight into Somerville and Ross’s novel, and again illustrates how Irish women’s writing stretches beyond patriarchal ideals of femininity and gender.

Keith Gregor's essay also explores the subversive possibilities of Irish women's writing, by analysing at length the emergence of a new female drama in the North of Ireland. Gregor particularly focuses on the work of three notable playwrights: Christina Reid, Anne Devlin and Marie Jones. By means of their female protagonists, mostly working-class women caught between conflicting political views, these playwrights articulate the current situation in the North. They also problematize issues of nationalism and colonialism in their representation of women who feel imprisoned in their assigned roles of daughters, wives and mothers.

This book does not only look into artistic representations of women; it also deals with the presence of real women in the political terrain, a public space traditionally and exclusively assigned to men. Trainor's illuminating essay on the life of Maud Gonne serves as a reminder of the pivotal and active role Irish women played in Ireland's fight for independence. The author offers an overview of Gonne's biography, in order to highlight some essential aspects of the political activism of this "servant of the Queen [Maeve]": her commitment with the evicted people in the Land Wars, her struggle for the release of Irish political prisoners, and her involvement in the so-called Irish Cultural Renaissance.

The book also contributes to wider debates on gender studies, by addressing not only the position of women as historical subjects or the aesthetic representations of femininity in Ireland, but also the forms and varieties of Irish masculinity. Fernández Sánchez's essay, for instance, considers the construction of male gender identity in three novels by contemporary Northern Irish writer Bernard Mac Laverty: *Lamb*, *Cal* and *The Anatomy School*. Fernández Sánchez particularly focuses on the homosocial relationships established by the male characters and how they are bound to guide themselves according to a particular set of social and 'official' norms which define their masculinity. The author also reveals the links between ideals of masculinity, on the one hand, and violence, power and truth, on the other. By investigating the way these norms are internalized, normalized or challenged, this study complicates conventional distinctions and binaries between femininity and masculinity in Ireland.

All in all, this book offers a sustained focus on questions of gender in Irish Studies by drawing into 1) the persistence of important forms of oppression in many images of femininity and masculinity that have survived the Irish cultural legacy and are still produced in the Republic of Ireland and the North of Ireland; 2) The creation of new images of femininity that subvert the feminine stereotype, or that reproduce it in order to assume an agentive role; and 3) The pressing need that many Irish women writers experience nowadays to forge and rediscover a new Irish female identity, freed from the colonial and patriarchal legacy. Therefore, this collection is an original and important contribution to the growing body of critical studies devoted to the field of Feminist and Gender Studies. Jaime de Pablo's sustained, meticulous, and exacting edition opens up and articulates from the perspective of gender hitherto unknown views on Irish history and canonical and non-canonical Irish writers. It is thus an essential and

valuable contribution for anyone interested not only in gender but also in any aspect of Irish Studies.

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